



SR 502 Interchange Project

news

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Why Are We Building This Interchange?

The new interchange connecting I-5 to NE 219th Street is an important step toward improving mobility and safety along the I-5 corridor.

The demands on the interstate—from local and regional growth, interstate travel and freight movement—are putting pressure on the interstate and local roads.

This interchange will:

- ease congestion and improve safety both northbound and southbound on I-5;
- improve safety along NE 10th Avenue by reducing traffic at several locations; and
- improve access to Battle Ground.

The project is moving from concept to reality with \$34.7 million in funding from the 2003 Legislative Transportation (or “Nickel”) Package. This funding will cover designing the project, acquiring right-of-way, and constructing the new interchange. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is designing and constructing the new interchange.

**IT'S YOUR NICKEL.
WATCH IT WORK.**

Plans for New Interchange Moving Ahead

Since you last heard from us, the State Route 502 interchange project team has refined the early conceptual roadway designs, with help from public comments and further investigation of wetlands, soil conditions, air quality, vegetation and wildlife habitat, land use and other conditions. Now, we are recommending a design that shows the general location of the interchange.

At the upcoming March 25 open house (see details on back page) find out the latest in the project design process and what will happen next. You can review the alternatives considered, the criteria used for their evaluation and see the recommended design for the interchange.

Public Involvement Key to Project Design Open Houses Seek Community Feedback

Word of a new interchange connecting I-5 to SR 502 drew a crowd to the project's scoping meeting and first open house last October. Those who attended learned about goals for the project, viewed maps and exhibits of the preliminary concept alternatives (possible roadway alignments), and talked with members of the project team. Many attendees provided written comments for consideration during the environmental review and the preliminary design process. You will find the open house comments and a project update on the project



Web site: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR502/Interchange/.

We'll keep you up-to-date through mailers, public notices, the Web site and the local media. We want to know what you think. Public involvement is key in developing a successful project.

Project Schedule and Overview

To help you understand how designing the SR 502 interchange works and how long it will take, the following schedule describes the significant steps from development until construction. The schedule may be shorter or longer, depending on the outcome of earlier steps.

	Fall 2003	Winter 2003/2004	Spring 2004	Summer 2004	Fall 2004	Winter 2004-2005	Spring 2005	Summer 2005	Fall 2005-Summer 2006	Fall 2006
Decisions/Actions		We Are Here → 1					2 3			4
Public Involvement	Open house/scoping meeting to introduce project, gather information and review preliminary roadway alternatives.		Review refined alternatives, the criteria used for evaluation and the Recommended Build Alternative.			Public review of and comment on Environmental Assessment. Hearing to give public officials and property owners an opportunity to express concerns on proposed SR 502 access limitations.				
Design	Develop a wide range of alternatives which meet the project's purpose and need.		Refine design of alternatives to minimize impacts to the environment. Carry favored design into further evaluation.			Prepare engineering drawings.		Prepare construction contract documents based on the preferred alternative.		Award construction contract.
Environmental		Evaluate current environmental conditions such as wetlands, soil conditions, air quality and vegetation and wildlife habitat to assist with the development of alternatives. Determine which alternatives affect the lesser number of properties. Environmental team advises the project team on a Recommended Build Alternative.		Environmental studies evaluate impacts of the Recommended Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative. This information is documented in the Environmental Assessment.		WSDOT releases Environmental Assessment for public review and comment. These comments, along with the Environmental Assessment, are sent to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for review.	FHWA review/ approval. Allows WSDOT to build project.		Obtain environmental permits prior to construction to ensure impacts to the environment are minimized.	

Decisions /Actions: **1** Identify Recommended Build Alternative. **2** WSDOT and FHWA decision on level of environmental impact associated with Recommended Build Alternative. **3** Finding and Order: The legal document establishing access limitations onto SR 502. **4** Construction begins, weather dependent.

Where We Are

The Environmental Assessment

Before we can evaluate the potential environmental effects of any project, we need to understand the natural, cultural, social and economic conditions that currently exist in the area. We also need to learn what the public knows about the local environmental conditions and their concerns about the project. This is taken into consideration as the project progresses. Collecting this information is an important step in the Environmental Assessment, which guides our review of interchange design options.

The scoping meeting/open house in fall 2003 was our first chance to talk with local residents and business and property owners to gather information and identify additional alternatives. Then we gathered data about wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, social and economic conditions, land use and water quality. Using this information, along with public

comments, we evaluated the alternatives to see which avoided or minimized undesirable effects on natural resources and the community. If consequences cannot be avoided, we do what is reasonable to reduce these impacts.

The Environmental Assessment will study a no-build alternative and a recommended build alternative. The recommended build alternative will be evaluated against many different criteria to determine its effects, if any, on the environment. The no-build alternative will evaluate the possible effects caused by not building the project, such as increased traffic congestion, decreased air quality and continued safety concerns. FHWA will then review the Environmental Assessment. If no significant environmental impacts are identified, FHWA will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and the project will move forward.

Other Requirements

In addition to completing an Environmental Assessment according to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), other federal regulations must also be followed. These include Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires protection of cultural, historic and archaeological resources. Tribal consultation and compliance with the Endangered Species Act also are required. We will prepare a Biological Assessment that specifically addresses effects on federally protected fish, wildlife and plant species that may be affected by the project. To save time, WSDOT is addressing these federal regulations as part of the Environmental Assessment process.

Access Control and Right-of-Way

In addition to assessing environmental impacts, we will identify how to limit access onto SR 502 and determine

which properties will need to be purchased to construct the interchange.

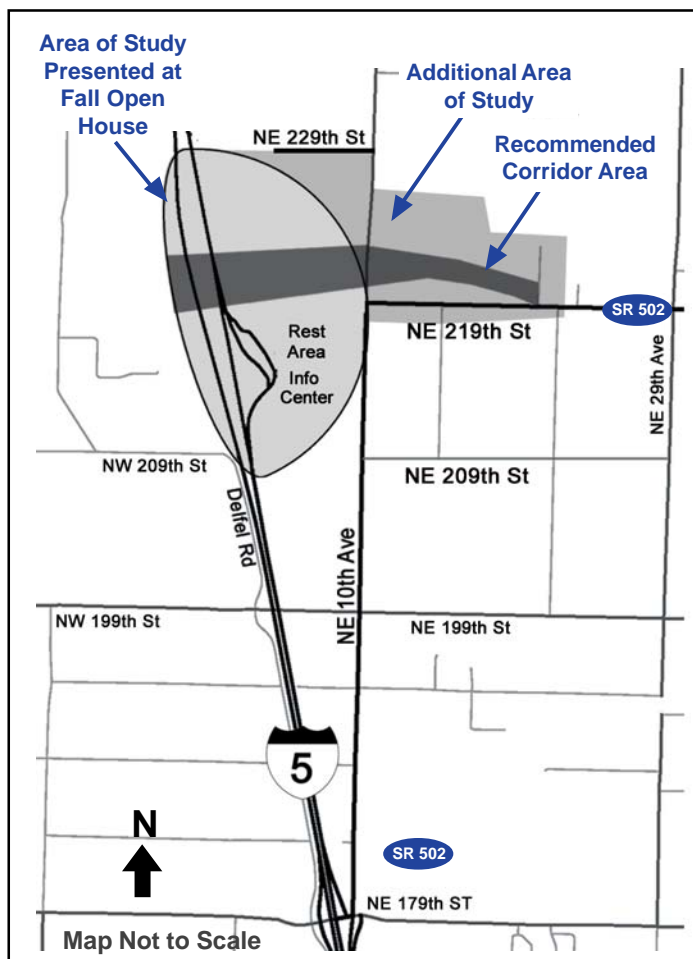
The land necessary to construct and maintain the road system is called right-of-way. It is owned by the state, cities or counties. When acquiring property for right-of-way, payment of “just compensation” is required and is determined by an independent appraisal of the property. Upon completion and review of an approved appraisal, a written offer is presented to the property owner.

Access to high speed roads, interstate ramps or high accident areas is controlled for safety and to allow the roadway to carry the intended volume of vehicles. “Access control” limits where the highway can be entered. If access control affects the interests of an adjacent property, the owner/tenant is appropriately compensated.

WSDOT May Offer Early Land Sale Opportunity

Since this interchange project was a priority of the Washington State 2003 Legislative session and has strong public support, we are working with an accelerated design schedule to save time, wherever the process allows. As part of this schedule, we may provide the opportunity for some property owners in the project area to sell land earlier than normal. This land is typically needed for stormwater storage, balancing the loss of wetlands or other uses independent of a final design.

Acquiring the property for this type of transportation project can be a long, complex step. By purchasing some property earlier, we can move more quickly to reach our goal of improving safety on I-5 (by reducing weaving between the junction of I-5 and I-205 and the existing exit), reducing congestion in the area and helping improve access to Battle Ground. Early acquisition can also eliminate uncertainty about the future for some property owners. WSDOT is now securing funds for this early property acquisition and may contact potential and known willing sellers in early summer 2004.



Interchange Study Area Revised

The map of the study area in our last newsletter illustrated the approximate area under consideration for a new SR 502 interchange. This study area was used to design the preliminary concept alternatives, get public feedback and investigate existing environmental conditions. The evaluation of this information led us to expand the original study area to accommodate a more complete range of alternatives.

We then analyzed all of these alternatives and are now considering a specific roadway alignment within the recommended corridor area (dark gray). You can view more detailed maps and learn about the evaluation criteria at the March 25 open house, or you can visit our Web site at the address below.

Project Contact

Call, write, or e-mail us with your questions or comments.

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Mark Your Calendar

Stop By Anytime

Thursday, March 25, 6-8 pm

**Public Open House at Battle Ground High School Cafeteria
300 West Main Street in downtown Battle Ground**

Meeting facilities are accessible to people with disabilities, and children are welcome. Individuals requiring reasonable accommodation may request written material in alternative formats, sign language interpreters, physical accessibility accommodations, or other reasonable accommodations by contacting Chuck Ruhsenberger at 360-759-1310 by March 19, 2004.



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Web Site

Visit our project's new Web site address at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR502/Interchange/.